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October 6, 1997

Docket Clerk
U.S. DOT Docket
Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590-0001

97 OCT -9 PM 3:09
DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
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RE: Docket No. FHWA-97-2759-12
RIN 2125-AE19, 49CFR391.11(b)(2)
English Language Requirement

This is to express our opposition to a change in the regulation which requires a person driving a motor vehicle in interstate commerce to have the ability to read and speak English, to understand signs and signals, to respond to official inquiries, and to make entries on reports and records.

This is very much a safety issue. It has been my experience (over 40 years in trucking) that the safety training and compliance issues are not properly accomplished when the trainers are dealing with personnel that cannot understand or communicate a common language. It would be cost prohibitive to expect a Motor Carrier to properly safety train driver personnel in whatever language he was fluent. Its difficult enough to accomplish adequate safety training when all personnel is fluent in English.

The FHWA seriously erred when they failed to make speaking and understanding English a specific pre-requisite for the CDL and later authorized administration of the CDL test in foreign language. FHWA imposes on the motor carrier responsibilities for safety matters, accident reporting, hours of service regulations and other requirements for the conduct of its personnel. By their action they greatly hampered the carriers ability to insure the safety of their operations.


2 pgs

Page 2

This is not an issue of discrimination, as the ACLU suggests. This is purely a public safety issue which is the reason it was enacted in the first place in 1936.

It is our hope that you will deny the proposed revision to 49CFR391.11(b)(2).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Duane O'Donnell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Duane O'Donnell
Senior Vice President